

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Sedley's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Street, Southfleet, Gravesend, Kent, DA13 9NR

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Rochester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Kent
Date of inspection	24 November 2016
Date of last inspection	18 October 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary VA 118595
Headteacher	Alison Coppitters
Inspector's name and number	Patrick Boughton-Reynolds 897

School context

Sedley's Church of England primary was established in 1637 by Sir John Sedley to provide education for the local village children. The school is housed in its original building although it has been significantly extended. Since the previous inspection, the school has converted to voluntary aided (VA) status. There are 101 pupils on roll who are mainly taught in mixed-age classes. The majority of pupils are White British, with a mix of minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of disadvantaged pupils and those with English as an additional language are significantly below national averages. There are no pupils with an education, health and care plan or a statement of special needs.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sedley's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian ethos of the school is deeply embedded and significantly impacts upon the lives and achievement of pupils.
- Pupils clearly articulate the importance of the Christian values in their lives.
- Collective worship is at the heart of the school which continually serves to strengthen its Christian character.
- The strong relationship between the school and the local church is key to its success as a church school.
- Leadership and governance are considerable strengths that enable the school to prepare well for the future.

Areas to improve

- Consolidate the school's core values and mission statement, and ensure that these underpin school policies, so that they can provide a fully cohesive identity for the school's Christian character.
- Embed pupil leadership and evaluation of collective worship so that recent improvements can be maintained and developed.
- Develop the role of questioning in religious education (RE) to stretch and to challenge pupils so that they deepen their understanding and critical thinking skills and make above expected progress in RE.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding

Sedley's is a deeply Christian school. This is due to its long history of being the oldest school in the Rochester diocese and to its distinctive Christian character, which is visibly lived out in the daily life of the school. Pupils are cared for and taught well and, as a result, they make good progress which is in line with national averages. In January 2016, the school acted on advice from the diocese in order to identify a more manageable range of Christian values than previously. After consultation with pupils and a foundation governor, these were chosen as honesty, love, caring and sharing, forgiveness, self-control and faith in God. These Christian values have been successfully established. They are known by all pupils and reflected upon. A Year 1 pupil said she felt that love is the most important value because 'love is nice and makes everyone happy'. Understanding of the values has built up the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of all pupils, whether they are Christian, of other faiths or of none. Parents said that the Christian values are visibly present in the school and gave examples of how the older children look after the younger children as a point of how 'caring' was naturally part of the school. As a result of the embodied Christian values, behaviour is excellent around the school.

Pupils are reflective and can talk about how the Christian values impact upon their own daily lives and the lives of others in the school community. One Year 5 pupil said he showed care to his peers 'when they had a fall out, I helped them be friends'. Another Year 4 pupil was pleased that he showed great self-control when he stayed calm when his brother was annoying him. Christian values are therefore central to pupils for building positive relationships in the school and in the wider community. Pupils can articulate these values as Christian through reference to biblical stories. They have acquired this clear understanding through the school's successful collective worship programme and through RE which introduces them to gospel stories in their early years. Pupils and parents articulate the importance of values in building the Christian character of the school. However, the school's mission statement is not well known by them and therefore their understanding of the school's overall vision is limited. The school's mission statement and values need to be integrated clearly so that Christian character of Sedley's is more deeply understood, expressed and embodied by the school community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Parents spoke of the value and importance of collective worship in the lives of their children because it provides calm opportunities for reflection and gives them 'bigger perspectives on life'. Pupils appreciate worship in their daily life in school. Pupils spoke of the benefits, for example, in the words of a Year 5 pupil as 'when your head is full of algebra and stuff, you get to clear your mind'. Others agreed that 'it releases your stresses'. Pupils particularly appreciate Friday worship in the church of St Nicholas led by the incumbent. Pupils spoke of how they feel safe and cared for because of worship. As one Year 5 pupil explained, 'you have a feeling that God is looking down on you' and another Year 3 pupil said that she 'feels safe because God is watching'. Year 6 pupils look forward to their monthly communion services, and other pupils felt proud representing the school at the monthly Sunday parade services, especially the remembrance service. A poignant moment for many was when the Key Stage 2 pupils formed a guard of honour at the funeral of a school governor who had served for over 50 years. This serves to illustrate the deep connections that Sedley's has in the community and how its history encompasses and impacts upon many lives. Pupils are actively engaged in worship and enjoy it. All adults and pupils sing the hymns, pray and say the Anglican liturgical responses together. Every Thursday, staff lead worship, including those of other faiths. The school's values are explored in depth and the Christian understanding of God is illustrated, particularly through Gospel parables. Pupils are developing their involvement in worship including in leadership. Their roles are limited at present by not being offered enough opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate worship independently. The headteacher and vicar meet weekly to review and prepare the worship programme which ensures that the development plan for worship is being actioned.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE has been led effectively by the headteacher, and has benefitted greatly from the change in status to a voluntary aided (VA) school. As a result, RE has a higher profile within the school. The majority of teaching is good and pupils make good progress from their starting points and in relation to other core subjects. Diocesan schemes and resources are used effectively and, as a result, pupils exhibit good subject knowledge of Christianity and of other world religions. Clear assessment procedures are in place and the school is incorporating the new diocesan assessment frameworks into RE. The school is accurate in its evaluation of the teaching and learning in RE. In

observed lessons, pupils were actively engaged in appropriate activities and had good subject knowledge. In an excellent upper Key Stage 2 lesson, pupils were analysing two Gospel texts using a range of enquiry and evaluation skills. Pupils could reflect on their learning in RE and knew if they were making progress. Teachers are not afraid to seek specialist advice about difficult subject matter. They have drawn upon the theological expertise of the vicar, for example, to support their teaching of evolution and creation.

Questioning is generally used effectively to clarify understanding in RE across the school. RE is not yet outstanding because pupils are not stretched and challenged enough to make above expected progress and because pupils' critical thinking is underdeveloped across the school. The use of better verbal questioning needs to be embedded throughout the Key Stages and also in developmental feedback, in order to develop the deeper thinking skills of all pupils. The future leadership of RE is secure through the training of an experienced teacher to lead on the new 'Understanding Christianity' project. He has a clear understanding of the importance of RE and a solid grasp of the teaching and learning approach of the new initiative.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding

Christian leadership is strong at Sedley's school. The chair of governors, who is the incumbent, has been an ex-officio governor for over 10 years. He works closely with the headteacher, who has been in post for 18 years. This relationship has been pivotal in building the solid foundations between the school and the local church. Succession planning is at the forefront of governor's strategic plans so that they can secure the future of the school as a church school serving the local community and the wider Christian community. The school's distinctively Christian mission statement provides clear vision to governors for their strategic planning. Leaders have a clear understanding of the role of values in ensuring that this vision is realised in the school. However, the school's vision and values do not permeate through all policies. School paperwork needs to show clearly how the distinctive Christian character of Sedley's underpins all aspects of the school's curriculum and provision.

The school is a training school for prospective school leaders through the 'national professional qualification for headteachers' (NPQH) programme and the headteacher has worked with the diocese in training future leaders. Governors are active in the school. Partnerships with the church are strong through initiatives such as 'messy church' and the weekly coffee mornings for school parents held in the church. Sedley's has a number of collaborations with local and diocesan schools that are of mutual benefit. The parent and friends association run the 'May Fayre' which brings together the whole community. The school raises significant funds for various charities, through events such as 'trainer trudge' for Children in Need. Pupils see this as a way of living out their Christian values of 'caring and sharing' and 'loving'. Yet it is also in the small things that the school's character is epitomised, such as in the Year 6 pupils and parents bringing mince pies to the elderly of the village at Christmas. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and for collective worship.

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